

~~ADDENDUM TO~~

DOCENA COMMUNITY

Birmingham Industrial District

Adamsville & Ensley Roads (JCT 65)

Birmingham vic.

Jefferson County

Alabama

HAER No. AL-76

HAER  
ALA  
37-BIRM.V,  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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ADDENDUM TO  
DOCENA COMMUNITY

HAER No. AL-76

Location: Adamsville-Ensley Road (JC 65) in the vicinity of Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama.

Date of  
Construction: est. 1907

Significance: Early coal mining camp (Tennessee Coal & Iron Co.) with distinctly separated sections for blacks and whites

Period of  
Significance: 1907-1920s

Project  
Information: This report is based upon written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Prior to 1907 Docena was the site of Booker City, a black community organized around educational facilities established about 1905 by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in Alabama. In 1907, the church exchanged the site for 30 acres in Vinesville (now Fairfield) and in 1908 reorganized the school as Miles Memorial College, in honor of Bishop William H. Miles. Development of the Docena (derived from the Spanish for the number 12) mine began in 1907. Until 1912, a stockade for convicts who worked at the No. 12 Pratt mine was located on what is Second Street, Docena, today. Old-timers vividly recalled seeing the convicts march in straight columns up to the Frisco Railroad stop and board trains for Sloss' Flat Top Mine. In 1912, TCI discontinued the practice of convict leasing. By this year, 70 miners were employed there and 237 others worked in positions outside the mines. By 1918, wartime demand swelled the labor force to 825 persons, most of whom lived in the community with their families. In the early 1940s, as many as 1,228 persons were employed at the Docena mine.

Docena Village, referred to in a TCI (Tennessee Coal & Iron Company) "Key to Progress" photograph of January 3, 1912, as the No. 12 mine camp layout, is designed adjacent to a large central park and playground. Located on the park were a commissary (called a mercado in keeping with the Spanish theme of the village), a schoolhouse, a church shared by Baptists and Methodists, teachers' cottages and residences for the store manager, superintendent and chief accountant. Miner houses were located along a regular grid

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between First and Sixth Streets, with blacks living on Sixth Streets and on the fringes. A clubhouse and masonic meeting lodge was situated on a high knoll at Eighth Street.

The earliest houses constructed were the four-room square-tops intended for one or two families. As the community grew, bungalows of varied design and two and three-room doubles were built throughout the community. In 1918, major portions of the older houses were reconstructed and running water and interior toilets installed in some.

Docena Village was sold to John W. Galbreath and Company in the 1950s. When the mine closed in 1962, many people moved to find employment, but other purchased their homes and remained in the well-defined, isolated and attractive mining village.

#### **Sources Consulted**

White, Marjorie, The Birmingham District, pp. 256-258

Rikard, Marlene Hunt, "Take Everything You Are...And Give It Away: Pioneer Industrial Social Workers at TCI," The Journal of the Birmingham Historical Society, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 24-41